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Slaughter Calls on President Bush to Explain Decision on Iran Op-Ed

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today sent a letter to President Bush calling for an explanation of his Administration's decision to classify large sections of an editorial on US-Iran policy authored by former CIA official Flynt Leverett prior to its publication.

"A lack of respect for dissenting viewpoints defined this Administration's run up to the war in Iraq, and it came at a terrible cost to our national security," Rep. Slaughter said.
"There is no room for such an approach to any of the challenges which will confront our nation in the future."

In her letter to President Bush, Rep. Slaughter stated that she would "appreciate an explanation behind your Administration's decision to redact substantial passages from Mr. Leverett's op-ed, even though reportedly the CIA had already cleared the information based on which Mr. Leverett had drafted those passages."

"If classifying information in the previously published version of the article was not necessary, then I am left to believe that your Administration redacted information for political purposes," Rep. Slaughter wrote.

According to recent reports, the White House instructed the CIA to classify portions of Mr. Leverett's op-ed prior to publication, even though the piece contained information reportedly cleared by the Agency on a previous occasion. Mr. Leverett is a prominent analyst on the Middle East who served under President Bush on the National Security Council. He is now a fellow at the New America Foundation. His editorial was described as being critical of the Administration's refusal to diplomatically engage Iran.

The complete text of Rep. Slaughter's letter to the White House, as prepared, is included below:

December 19, 2006

The President

The White House

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to seek clarification of the processes and policies employed by your Administration in determining whether materials contain classified information and when to withhold information from the public.

According to an article published in the *Washington Post* today, Flynt Leverett, a former National Security Council Advisory, who left the Administration in 2003, suggested that the White House had redacted substantial passages of an opinion article on Iran. According to Mr. Leverett, this article was "only a summary of a longer paper" he had written a few weeks earlier which the CIA had cleared as "containing no classified information."

I am concerned that your Administration is employing inconsistent policies when classifying information. If, indeed, redacting the information from the op-ed was necessary for national security purposes, then the CIA's failure to deem the information in the previously published version of the article as classified may have put our security at risk. If classifying information in the previously published version of the article was not necessary, then I am left to believe that your Administration redacted information for political purposes.

I would also appreciate an explanation behind your Administration's decision to redact substantial passages from Mr. Leverett's op-ed, even though reportedly the CIA had already cleared the information based on which Mr. Leverett had drafted those passages

Given the questions this incident raises about your Administration's consistency in applying policies and processes to reviewing classified information and your willingness to allow criticism by the national security and intelligence communities that disagree with your policies, I ask that you clarify and explain policies pertaining to how and when information is deemed classified and also your decision to intervene in the publication of the article written by Mr. Leverett.

Thank you for reviewing my request, and I await your response.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter

Member of Congress

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